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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4482  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2823  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2943  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1386  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2206  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2571  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2991  
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2115  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000402

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: MDC-M SUSPENSIONS REVEAL SPLIT IN PARTY

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SUMMARY  
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1. (SBU) The President of the MDC-M and Deputy Prime Minister, Arthur Mutambara, and other top party officials suspended six senior party members, including three MPs. The suspensions have unearthed growing dissent within the MDC-M about Mutambara's leadership, which some party officials and party supporters feel has become too pro-ZANU-PF. The suspended officials may ultimately be expelled, which would result in three parliamentary vacancies. However, the displaced MPs could be expected to hold onto their seats by running as either independents or choosing to rejoin the ranks of the much larger MDC-T. END SUMMARY.

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Suspensions Roil the MDC-M  
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2. (SBU) On May 8, the leadership of the MDC-Mutambara faction (MDC-M) suspended six senior officials from the party, including three sitting parliamentarians, on charges of bringing the party into disrepute. The six officials had been openly critical of the party's leadership under Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara, charging him along with his deputies Welshman Ncube and Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga of seconding the party's interests to those of ZANU-PF and President Mugabe. The suspended officials include, Nkayi South MP Abednico Bhebhe, Bulilima East MP Norman Mpofu, Lupane East MP Njabuliso Mguni, party defense secretary Job Sikhala, youth chairman Gift Nyandoro, and Matabeleland South treasurer Alex Goosen.

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Is He Really the Best Leader Africa has Produced?  
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3. (SBU) Bhebhe met with poloff and pol specialist on May 12 and explained the origins and implications of the rift within

the MDC-M. According to Bhebhe, the issue first arose during the selection of the Speaker of Parliament, when Mutambara pressed MPs to support the candidacy of Paul Themba Nyathi of the MDC-M, in lieu of either Gibson Sibanda of the MDC-M or Lovemore Moyo of the MDC-T. Recognizing that they did not have the votes to elect their own candidate, ZANU-PF also backed Nyathi, but eight of the ten MDC-M MPs did not want to be seen on the same side as ZANU-PF and bucked Mutambara by voting for Moyo. The bad blood this created was exacerbated by controversial and inflammatory statements by Mutambara, including referring to President Obama's decision to extend sanctions as being "based on ignorance and arrogance," saying that "the West needs to shut up," and most recently referring to Mugabe as "father Africa" and "the best leader Africa has produced."

¶4. (SBU) Bhebhe believed that Mutambara in particular, but also Ncube and Misihairabwi-Mushonga, had grown too close to Mugabe and had become indirect agents of ZANU-PF. He also described Mutambara's leadership style as being authoritative and reminiscent of Mugabe. While addressing several recent Qand reminiscent of Mugabe. While addressing several recent rallies designed to raise doubts about Mutambara's allegiances, Bhebhe said that people had demanded to know why they had been told to support Mutambara if he was not going to act as an opposition figure. Bhebhe said that many of the MDC-M supporters he had spoken with were shocked in particular by Mutambara's complimenting of Mugabe.

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Three Seats at Stake

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¶5. (SBU) When asked what parliamentary implications the suspensions hold for the three sitting MPs, Bhebhe explained that there will be an inquiry held by the party's disciplinary committee that will likely result in a recommendation to the MDC-M National Council to expel the six members. If the National Council agreed with the recommendation -- as Bhebhe seemed to believe would happen -- a letter would be written to the Speaker of Parliament stating that the three MPs were no longer members of the MDC-M. As seats in Parliament belong to the party not individuals, this would vacate the seats. However, according to last September's Inter-party Political Agreement (IPA), within the first 12 months of the formation of a new government the three parties agreed not to contest any parliamentary vacancy. Bhebhe said that because the IPA was only binding on the three signatory parties, it would not preclude him or the other two MPs from running as independents. He was confident that he would win a bi-election as an independent. Alternatively, if his expulsion occurred after February 13, 2010, he would likely rejoin the MDC-T and run under their banner.

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COMMENT  
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¶6. (SBU) Bhebhe and Sikhala are the ringleaders of a group of MDC-M officials who have had enough of Mutambara's reckless and inconsistent behavior. Mutambara fluctuates between appearing to be a determined reformer one moment, to then ingratiating himself to Mugabe and ZANU-PF leaders the next. While this has alienated him from much of his party, he has emerged as a force in Cabinet and principal meetings, largely overshadowing the other Deputy Prime Minister, Thokozani Khupe. Because Mutambara lacks a political base -- he failed to win a seat in parliament last year -- he is trying to elevate his profile and find allies.

¶7. (SBU) Within Parliament we do not believe the shake-up will have wide-ranging implications. If the three MDC-M MPs are expelled, they will probably run as independents, as only

the MDC-M could challenge them within the next nine months.  
Given this, it is unlikely that they would be displaced.  
After nine months, they would likely be welcomed back into  
the ranks of the MDC-T. END COMMENT.

MC GEE